



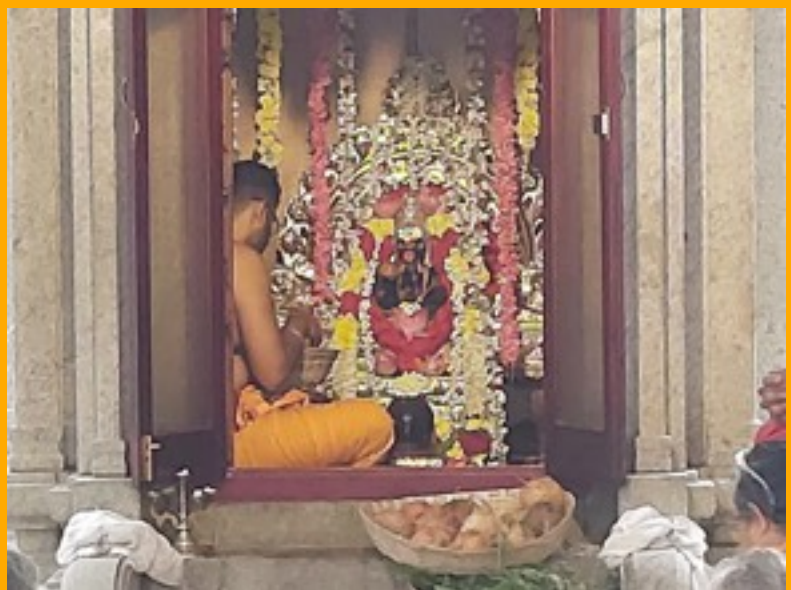
Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Rs. 15/-



108 Days Course Inauguration Puja

Vinayagar Caturti Pooja at AVG



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*Arsha Vidya
Newsletter*

In fearless voice may
we proclaim

The Rishi's message
from all house-tops

And bring the men
of different claim

To a fold of Love
where oneness lasts!

śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogād avaihi

Seventh part of the serial article continued from August 2019 issue. Bhakti topic continues...

Our Vedic tradition has varieties of prayers and not simply broad-spectrum prayers. Prayers to each presiding *devata*. Dhanvantri *devata* is worshipped for health, Lakshmi is propitiated for wealth, Sarasvati for Education, Vigneshvara for removing obstacles in any endeavour etc.

We have specific prayers. Since the *kāyika-karma* produces more result than a *vācika-karma*, we need that result. I am just giving you the psychology of it now. When you perform a *karma*, a ritual, you are making an effort. Whatever little *bhakti* you have is converted into real *bhakti* when you make efforts. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “If one gives even such small things like a leaf or a flower or fruit or just water, but with *bhakti*, I accept it.”¹ Why should one give a leaf etc., when Bhagavān does not take anything? It is not for Bhagavān to take, but to make your *bhakti* real.

With *bhakti* you make an effort—you get a tulasi leaf, you get the fruit, you get a little water for offering as *arghya*, oblation. In all this, action is involved. What is important is *karma*. When you do that *karma* with *bhakti*, whatever *bhakti* you have in the form of fancy becomes real *bhakti*. You fake it and make it. When you do an action, the emotion becomes real. Therefore, you act it out. Someone said you walk the talk. You act out your emotions. You actualise your emotions through an action. The action makes the emotion real and the real emotion makes you act, and thereby you turn into a *bhakta*. Otherwise, this *bhakti* remains only as some kind of a feeling. *Karma* is necessary to make it real, because you have to make some efforts in doing the *karma*. You may ask, “Can I do this *karma* mentally?”

“You can do it mentally, but why not physically?”

“What will others think?”

“Others will think that you are doing *pūjā*. They will think that you are a *bhakta*.”

“I do not want to be branded as a *bhakta*.”

“Let them brand you as a *bhakta*. Get a name like that. Earn the name *bhakta*.”

For all the wrong reasons such as laziness, false ego, etc., we want to escape. Because of the very fact that we want to escape, we need to do it.

¹ *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati tadahaṁ
bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi...* (Bhagavad Gītā 9.26).

There can be different types of problems in your *śravaṇa*, listening, to Vedānta. For instance, understanding may not take place while listening to the *śāstra* because the unconscious creates a disturbance in the mind. The more you bring in *Īśvara*, the less is the hold of the unconscious over you, because *Īśvara* becomes father, mother, everything. It is how you deal with the unconscious. Simple things become a problem because the unconscious will not let that knowledge happen. It will only create doubts. What is obvious never becomes obvious. You always wonder why you do not understand this. Therefore, *īśvara-anugraha* is necessary here.

Bhakti is meant for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. *Śraddhā* itself will lead you to *bhakti*. You need to have this *nitya-karma* for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. You do *kāyika-karma* to keep away all the obstacles. So too, *vācika-karma*, daily chanting of the Vedic hymns, reciting prayer verses, singing in praise of Bhagavān and *japa* of any name of the Lord is for *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*.

You can sing what is to be sung. What is to be recited you recite. What is to be chanted you should chant. You should not sing a Vedic *mantra*. All the Vedic hymns are to be chanted. What should be read should be read. Prose is to be read, a verse is to be recited, a Vedic hymn is to be chanted and a song is to be sung.

Generally, we have all these three karmas in our daily prayers—*kāyika*, *vācika* and *mānasa*. This three-fold prayer produces *anugraha* and keeps all the obstacles away. Even if you have understood Vedānta, the clarity increases. You never do away with *Īśvara*. Either he is in the form of you, or he is in the form of your worshipful altar. He is never gone. All the above come under *iṣṭa-karma*.

The other set of karma is *pūrta-karma*, with which we fulfil the needs of the society, community, country and humanity in general. All reaching out *karmas*, so called charitable activities, are *pūrta-karmas*. Charity is not a very charitable word. Everybody lives on others' charity. Where is the question of our doing charity? We have our breakfast because of others' charity. Somebody has to produce the food. We cannot eat money. We are always indebted to a number of forces. So when we can give we give, and when we have to take we take. Everybody is a consumer and everybody is a giver. We give more than we consume; that is what maturity is. It is called *pūrtakarma* that produces *punya*.

A list of *pūrta-karmas* are given in the *smṛtis*:² Providing for water sources such as wells, ponds and lakes, building temples, distributing food, and building rest houses are called *pūrta-karmas*. You can include more according to the present day needs like providing for a clinic, a hospital, a home for children and so on. Only these two types of *karma*, *iṣṭa* and *pūrta* are there. You do them with *bhakti*. By acts of *bhakti* you gain the *adhikāritva*, competence, to study the *śāstra*. Once *adhikāritva* is there, which includes *śraddhā*, you gain this knowledge with the *guru's* teaching.

.....to be continued

Isaavasya Upanishad Retreat at AVG, Anaikatti

By Swami Sadatmanandaji

The retreat took place between the 10th and 17th of August 2019 at the Gurukulam in Anaikatti. I flew down from UK for the purpose of attending it. We were a mixed group of people – from those hearing Vedanta for the first time to 3 year course graduates and there were also *sannyasis*. Amidst the rolling mountains and rare flora and fauna surrounding the Gurukulam, Swamiji led us through a schedule of meditation sessions, classes, *bhajans* and *satsangs*. Outside of the classroom, we were blessed to be able to observe puja and *aarti* at the Lord Dakshinamurti and Kalyan Subramaniam Temple on the hill.



The lectures began with an introduction to Vedanta which inspired both new and senior students to learn more. Break times were filled with enthusiastic discussions about what we had heard. Masterfully, we were seamlessly led from the introduction to the invocation to the *Upanishad*.

The introduction began by the observation that human life is one where everyone is busy carrying out activities for some purpose. The multitude of human goals was categorized into the four Purusharthas, which were then elaborated upon. This sets the relevance for the study of Vedanta. The human personality was explained and the *atma-anatma-viveka* was unfolded.

Having given this *Drg Drishya Viveka* (discrimination of seer and seen), in the next class the cause of the world as *Ishwara* was explained. The method of appreciating *Ishwara* in and through every experience as Order or existence, was a useful understanding which many of the students began to tune into immediately. *Ishwara* was described as the material and efficient cause of the world. Thus having explained *Tat* (that *Ishwara*) and *Tvam* (this individual *jiva*), the relationship between the two was explained. We still had not formally started the *upanishad*!

When the *Upanishad* did begin on day 2, the profound invocation prayer - *purnamadah, purnamidam...*- which itself gives the essence of entire *Vedanta* was presented. Without a competent, learned teacher, this prayer itself cannot be clearly understood!

Isaavasya Upanishad is a short, all-comprehensive text consisting of 18 *mantras*. The first *mantra* of the *Upanishad* which is often quoted –*isaavasya idam sarvam ..*- begins with a bang presenting the vision of *Vedanta*. The *Upanishad* in the first two *mantras* presents the 2 lifestyles one can adopt to pursue *jnanam* - *nivrtti marga* characterized mainly by *sanyasa asram* for a prepared seeker and *pravrtti marga* characterized by *Grhastha asrama*.

Mantras 3 to 8 elaborated on the *nivrtti marga*, the knowledge of the self and the result. A multitude of examples were given by Swamiji to explain what is *atma*, how it is the absolute truth and the impermanence of the world which we so strongly hold on to. *Mantra* 9 to 18 was on *pravrtti marga* characterized by *karma-yoga* and *upasana*. The combination of *karma-yoga* and particular *upasana* was presented as the best way to attain the result in the form of *krma-mukti*. Thus in this way, the entire *Upanishad* was unfolded over 19 classes detailing the 2 lifestyles and the means and results of *atma-jnanam*.

We were also blessed to attend the celebration of Pujya Swami Dayanandaji's birthday with Japa of Lord Dakshinamurti beeja mantra followed by a talk by Swami Sadatmanandaji.

My humble pranams to Swami Sadatmaananda who with his jovial demeanor, explained subtle and difficult concepts in a simple and clear manner.

Thank you very much for a wonderful fulfilling week of inward journey!!

- Report up by Dr Chetan Morjaria

108 days Course Inauguration at AVG, Anaikatti

September 2nd 2019, *Bhadrapada Shukla Chaturthi*, apart from being the first and the main day of the ten day Ganapati festival that is celebrated all over India, also happened to be the inauguration day for the 108 day Bhagavad Geeta course, a precursor to the next long term course that is to be conducted under the able guidance of Swami Sadatmananda ji at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti.



The day started early at 4.00am with Ganapati Homam, and despite the early hours, many students showed up excited to witness their very first *homam* here. Soon after *poorNaahuti*, Bhatt ji the chief *archaka* continued with the regular *abhishekam* to Lord Dakshinamurthy, dressing him in spectacular garments and ornaments, decorated with myriad colourful flower garlands, it was tough to take eyes off of him once *pushpanjali* was completed!

We, the students and the teachers, then proceeded to Guru Tirtha at 7.15 am to offer our respects to Pujya Swamiji, where we were joined by Swami Tattvavidananda ji and Swami Satchidananda ji along with Swaminis Atmaratananda ji and Brahmaleelananda ji, all of whom had especially come down for this occasion to Anaikatti. At 9.15 am we assembled in the lecture hall where we all sat down in our respective assigned seats from the previous night. Swami Satchidananda ji was the Master of Ceremonies and he introduced all the Acharyas of the course, before requesting them to offer their Anugraha Bhashanams.

Swami Tattvavidananda ji in his fearless and frank style told us right away that most of us did not have an open mind! To listen to the *shastra* one needs to be empty of all preconceived notions, pre-formulations, and pre-judgements, we need to be humble enough to say, ‘I don’t know’, and also be very alert to what is being taught and talked of. Swamiji also said that study of *samskrutam*, especially literature was necessary to enjoy the *rasa* of life, which is in fact our real nature, and he impressed upon us that we must develop scientific temper, and that Veda or Vedanta is not against science.

Swami Shankarananda ji, who spoke next continued in the same vein and said that we are already what we seek, and therefore this beautiful journey without goals that Swami Tattvavidanandaji had talked of, was that much more lovely, especially when we receive *guru krupa*, *ishwara krupa*, and *aatma krupa*. Without the compassion and grace of one’s teacher, one’s *daivam*, and one’s own Self this study is impossible. With the 108 day Bhagavad Geeta study we will soon discover that we are no different from *jagat kaaraNam brahma*, he said. Geeta is both a *yogashastra* which prepares us as well, as also *brahmavidya* which shows us who we really are.

Concluding the session Swami Sadatmananda ji spoke eloquently about how Vedanta is a *taraNa vidya*, how this knowledge helps us to swim across the ocean of *samsaara*. He also talked of how Vedanta study will turn all that we have into a luxury, i.e. if things and people are there and act conducive towards us well and good, we are happy, if not, well and good too! Modern life unfortunately is so dependent on everything and everybody, that it has made luxuries into necessities. We are unable to be without technology even for a second for example.

After this spectacular session by *Swamijis*, we headed to the temple again for *Ganapati Caturti Puja*. Sixteen rounds of *Ganapati Atharvaseersha Upanishad* was chanted while the *abhishekams* were done, followed by regular *shodasopacaras*. Chief Archaka, Bhatt ji despite such a grueling schedule conducted all the rites with great *shraddha* with the help of Krishna ji and Sriram ji. Under the guidance of Swamini *ammam* all the *poojas* went off very well, and it provided an auspicious start for our new course. *Prasadam* and Lunch followed which were delicious as usual, and kept up the AVG standards of being a great *Annadaana kshetra* as per Pujya Swamiji’s vision, where no one who comes here leaves hungry.

There are about 100 students from different parts of the globe and in India. Representing Canada, Brazil, Bulgaria, Hungary, Japan, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, as well as Andhra, Telangana, Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, UK, UP, Delhi, Odisha, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc. The student body is diverse and international with about half of them being women. Logistics for such a large group is not simple, but it was expertly conducted and streamlined with the help of Sumukhi ji, Kumar Chaitanyaji, Sharan ji, Ramachandran ji, Padma ji, and of course Swami Sadatmanandaji.

From allocating rooms as per preference, to seating arrangement in the lecture hall as per height, to inventory list of items in the rooms, to getting insurance, a new sim card, electing representatives for the various *seva* activities, all this was done in a very systematic manner. Within a matter of two-three days, all of us are well-settled and ready to start our classes from tomorrow i.e. September 3rd 2019. We are excited and looking forward to it with great eagerness. Given the sample classes that were conducted today as part of the *Ganesha Chaturthi* and Inauguration celebrations, we have no doubt that this will be a spectacular journey within and without.

Report by Krishna Kavita

More photos in wrapper 3

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End of summer 2019 report from Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg PA USA

The 2019 summer activities at ARSHA VIDYA GURUKULAM, Saylorsburg, included the following programs:

June 16-22 (Sun-Sat) **Yoga Sutra Course** taught by Swami Govinda Dev Giriji Maharaj (Guest Teacher)
Titled *Antaraṅga-sādhana*s

July 4-7 (Thu-Sun) **Independence Day Family Vedanta Course** taught by Swami Veditatmananda and Swamini Paraprajnananda on *Etat jñanam iti proktam* (BG13-11).

July 8-20 (Mon-Sat) **Two Week Bhāṣyam Classes for Adults** taught by Swami Veditatmananda
Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣyam (2.1.19 onwards)

July 21-27 (Sun-Sat) **Family Vedanta Course I** taught by Swami Veditatmananda
Vivekacudamani (254 onwards) “Crest Jewel of Discrimination”

July 21-27 (Sun-Sat) **Children’s Course I** - Unaccompanied by parents (Age 9-16)

July 28-Aug 3 (Sun-Sat) **Family Vedanta Course II**

Swami Veditatmananda: Texts: *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 2.2.5 onwards, BG 8 and 9 onwards

Swami Pratyagbodhananda: Texts *Dhruva-stuti* from *Bhāgavatam*

July 28-Aug 3 (Sun-Sat) **Children’s Course II** - Unaccompanied by parents (Age 9-12)

Aug 4-10 (Sun-Sat) **Family Vedanta Course III**

Texts taught by Swami Veditatmananda: *Kathopaniṣad* 2.1.6 onwards, BG chapter 8 and 9 continued from Vedanta course II. Texts taught by Swami Pratyagbodhananda: *Dhruva-stuti* from *Bhāgavatam* continued from Vedanta course II.

Aug 11 (Sun) **Gurukulam’s 33rd Anniversary** Swami Veditatmananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda (See program below)

Aug 12-15 (Mon-Thu) **Bhagavatam Family Course** Swami Veditatmananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda. Talks on **Śrīmad Bhāgavatam** by Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji: *Dhruva-stuti* from *Bhāgavatam* continued from Family Vedanta course II. **Anugrahabhāṣaṇam** was given every day by Swami Veditatmanandaji. **Bhāgavatam stories for youth** were also presented by Brahmachari Suryanarayana. **Śrīmad Bhāgavatam** is a *purāṇa* known for its stories about the devotees of *Bhagavān* and how they were all blessed in their lives in the most unimaginable ways by *Bhagavān* Himself. *Bhāgavatam* also has descriptions of all the *avatāras* and is the source of all details about the *avatāra* of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*



Aug 15-18 (Thu-Sun) **Patron's Complimentary Course I**. Swami Veditatmanandaji spoke about **Emotional Maturity** by exploring its various aspects and how to cultivate them. Swamiji explained how they are not only connected but are essential to gaining and assimilating the knowledge that one is free from the human sense of limitation. Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji spoke on **Navadha-bhakti** from *Tulsidas Rāmāyaṇa*.

Aug 19-27 (Mon-Tue) Vedanta Course. Swamini Svatmavidyananda ji spoke on **Adhyāsa (projection) in Vedanta**. The introductory *bhāṣya* of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya was studied with a view to gaining a clearer understanding of the orders of reality -- *īśvara-srṣṭi* and *jīva-srṣṭi* -- and understanding the truth of oneself as free of *saṃsāra*.

Aug 22-25 (Thu-Sun) **Purna Vidya Family Teachers Training** was taught by Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji. In India, the religious culture, which touches every aspect of one's life, was imbibed by osmosis from one's home and the immediate community. To cultivate and understand the values and attitudes, the *vaidika* vision and view of life was taught by Swamiji to the children growing up in USA in a structured way allowing the youth to discover their roots, trunks, branches, flowers, et al.

Aug 30 - Sept 2 (Fri-Mon) **Patrons Complimentary Course II** Maṅgalācaraṇam from Bhāgavatam taught by Swami Pratyagbodhananda.

Sept 4-11 (Wed-Wed) **Yoga and Sound** with Ramananda Patel, Pandit Mukesh Desai and Swami Paramatmananda - Absorption into sound while in yoga poses enabled the breath to flow more freely, bringing inner peace that led the aspirants to merge with the formless. Vedanta discourses by Swami Paramatmananda brought a deeper understanding of the Self.

- Report by Swamini Vilasanandaji

Ārṣa Vidyā Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA,

33rd Anniversary – August 11, 2019 ¹

Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati – Keynote address on Renunciation

Inner divinity

Swami Tadatmanandāji beautifully brought out the point that when we see divinity in ourselves we will see divinity in others. If there is divinity in me, how come I don't experience it? It is because of the darkness of ignorance. Divinity or consciousness or limitlessness or wholeness, by whatever name it is called, is my own nature. Since it is unfortunately veiled by ignorance, one fails to see the divinity in oneself. Ignorance is removed by knowledge just as darkness is removed by light. If we understand well how ignorance manifests itself in our lives, then we would know how to progressively get rid of that ignorance. It is, however, important to know that the removal of ignorance is not a one-shot deal. The removal of ignorance is a process, which culminates in abiding in the divinity that is oneself, and hence appreciating the divinity that is everywhere else. As Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji said, Bhagavad Gītā provides a two-step program to remove the ignorance that veils the inner divinity. The first step is *karma-yoga*. The second step is *jñāna-yoga*. All of this involves *tyāga*, renunciation, which is a means for removal of ignorance. “*tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānuśuḥ*”² that through *tyāga* many gained the immortality, meaning the divinity or limitlessness. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “*tyāgāt śāntiḥ anantaram*.”³ The renunciation is not as much an action as it is an attitude born of an understanding. As soon as *tyāga* takes place, we experience peace in our mind. Any agitation or sorrow that we experience, is due to lack of *tyāga*, or holding on to things. This “*holding on to*” is what we have to slowly let go.



The nature of ignorance

The ignorance that veils the inner divinity can be explained as being made up of three *guṇas* or three dispositions: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva* means purity, clarity, cheerfulness, happiness. *Rajas* means agitation. Lord Kṛṣṇa says ⁴ that *rajo-guṇa* manifests as *lobha*, greed. But the whole chain,

¹ The 33rd anniversary of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA was conducted on August 11, 2019 at the newly inaugurated Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam. The keynote address by Swami Vidadatmananda, given on this occasion, is summarized here. The talk was transcribed and edited by Krishnanand Maillacheruvu and V. Swaminathan, respectively.

² त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानुशुः (Kaivalyopaniṣad, 1.3)

³ श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते । śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsājñānāddhyānaṁ viśiṣyate

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ dhyānātkarmaphalatyaḡastyāḡacchāntirānantaram (Bhagavad Gītā 12.12)

Knowledge is better indeed than the practice of yoga; meditation is superior to knowledge; renunciation of the results of actions (is better) than meditation. Because of renunciation (there is) peace immediately. (Note that the translations of the Gītā verses referred in this article are taken from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 5th reprint, 2015.)

⁴ लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणामशमः स्पृहा । lobhaḥ pravṛttirārambhaḥ karmaṇāmaśamaḥ sprhā

रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ॥ rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha (Bhagavad Gītā 14.12)

Arjuna, the foremost in the clan of Bharata! Greed, physical restlessness, undertaking of activities, mental restlessness, longing – these are born when rajas has increased.

kāma-krodha-lobha, desire-anger-greed, is the manifestation of *rajo-guṇa*. Greed is the result of fulfilled desire, and anger (*krodha*) is the manifestation of unfulfilled desire. *Tamo-guṇa* connotes ignorance, which manifests as inactivity or laziness (*ālasyam*), sleep (*nidrā*) and inadvertence (*pramāda*). The *tamas* is what we have to progressively remove from us to own up our inner divinity. The encouraging aspect is that we do not have to wait until someday when all these are removed. Even if a little bit of ignorance is removed, there will be a sense of peace, and self-satisfaction. Then, we will know that what we are doing is right. When Arjuna gave up his bow and arrow and declared “*na yotsye* I will not fight this battle,”⁵ it is an expression of his ignorance. There was no motivation on his part to do what was right. Sometimes the *tamas* creates the delusion such that what is right appears wrong, and what is wrong appears right. This is what happened to Arjuna. He said, “Lord, I do not see that any purpose is served by fighting this battle.” He articulated a number of reasons, taking the help of the scriptures to justify, how the battle would cause nothing but violence and destruction. It would appear that he was not quite satisfied with his explanation because ultimately, he surrendered to the Lord, realizing that he was missing something. “*Śiṣyastē’haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam*” “I am your disciple; please teach me, who has taken refuge in you.”⁶

The manifestation of ignorance

Ignorance manifests as resistance to doing what is right, and sometimes even as the inclination to do what is wrong. *Adharma* is the grossest manifestation of ignorance. Sometimes one is compelled to even sacrifice or violate the basic values. Arjuna says in the Bhagavad Gītā, “*atha kena prayuktō’yaṁ pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ*,” “O Lord, impelled by what, does a person go against his values and commit *pāpa*?”⁷ As Pūjya Swamiji⁸ used to say, everybody knows what his values are. Basically everyone knows what is truthfulness, what is right, what is nonviolence, what is kindness, and so on. Still, something compels one to go against these values. The primary obstacle to realizing one's divinity is the violation of values or *adharma*. Hence, the first level of giving up ignorance is to give up *adharma*.

Values, commonly sensed and acquired

The first step towards realizing the inner divinity is a commitment to the right values, such that whatever one does is based on the moral values. Pūjya Swamiji called the moral values as commonly sensed values that everyone is aware of, namely that I should not do to others what I do not want them to do unto me. I do not want others to hurt me, and it is only right that I should not hurt them. I do not want others to cheat me, and lie to me, and therefore, it is only proper that I should not cheat, and lie to them. I want others to be kind, and forgiving to me, and that is what I should be with respect to them. These basic values are known to us because I know that what I expect from others is what they expect from me.

⁵ न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दमुक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह । *na yotsya iti govindamuktva tūṣṇīm babhūva ha* (Bhagavad Gītā 2.9)
'I shall not fight.' Speaking thus to Govinda (Lord Kṛṣṇa), he became silent.

⁶ यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ।
yacchrēyaḥ syānniścitaṁ brūhi tanmē śiṣyastē’haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam (Bhagavad Gītā 2.7)
Please tell me that which is truly better for me. I am your student. Please teach me, who has taken refuge in you.

⁷ अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः । *atha kena prayuktō’yaṁ pāpam carati pūruṣaḥ*
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ *anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balādiva niyojitaḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 3.36)
Arjuna said: Vārṣṇeya (Kṛṣṇa)! Impelled by what, does a person commit sin, as though pushed by some force even though not desiring to?

⁸ Swami Vidadatmananda's teacher Swami Dayananda Saraswati

When I know the commonly sensed values, and what is expected of me on every occasion, why do I still find myself violating the values? The reason is that we have another set of values called acquired values. Some values we have brought with us as *saṃskāras* from past lives, and others are acquired. Basically, we grow up in a society where we find everyone giving importance to wealth, fame, and power. People with wealth, fame, and power are the ones who are honored, and respected all over. While I may not as such have a value for money, I do have a value for being respected, a value for being honored, a value for being successful. Naturally, then, wealth, fame, and power become my acquired values. Hence, I have two sets of values, the universal values or the commonly sensed values, and the acquired values for material things. When there is a clash between the two sets of values, very often, the acquired values win! The commonly sensed moral values such as truthfulness and honesty lose ground. One fails to recognize as to how damaging this situation is. The value for wealth, and power can be assessed as they are gross, and quantifiable. But one does not readily see the damage caused to oneself by the sacrifice of the universal values. So, in order to bring out the divinity within oneself, the important thing for one to understand is the value of values, as to how all the moral values are extremely valuable to oneself.

The first level of shedding ignorance – Renunciation of *adharma*

The manifestation of the self-divinity is impeded by ignorance, which operates in the mind in the form of an impulse to violate the values. In other words, *adharma* is the first level of impediment. Therefore, there should be a commitment to *dharma* or righteousness. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that this is a difficult process; “*yattadagre viṣamiva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam*” “which in the beginning is like poison, but which, in the end, is like nectar.”⁹ One may protest, “Swami, this teaching is not practical. It is all good in the classroom. I guess it is alright for you Swamis, because you are given everything by others. You don't know what the world is like. You don't have to work in the world.” This is, perhaps, a valid objection. Nevertheless, even in simple situations following values such as speaking truth seems to be difficult! Suppose someone asks me, “Swami, what is your age?” If I do not want people to think that I am old, I lie that I am ten years younger than I am. (*laughter*) Or considering my age now, I add five years to it, and people compliment me saying, “You look young, Swamiji.” I happily respond, “Oh, Thank you.” (*laughter*) In other words, the value for looking young makes one to lie about one's age. In order to satisfy the acquired values, such as whether one should look young or look in a particular way, and so on, even in simple day-to-day things, one violates the moral values without realizing. Another example is jealousy, which arises seeing another person getting something more than what one has. Jealousy consumes the individual. Pūjya Swamiji remarked that jealousy has no value, no purpose! One must have the conviction that the basic moral values are valuable, and further, one has to recognize that they are valuable to oneself. The first level of *tyāga* is of this *adharma*, of this compulsion that might arise in one to violate the moral values, to take a short cut, or to get some cheap gains. One has to overcome this tendency and follow the right values. Following *dharma* is the first step towards discovering the inner divinity.

⁹ यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् । *yattadagre viṣamiva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam*

तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् । *tatsukhaṃ sātvaikam prōktamātmabuddhiprasādajam* (Bhagavad Gītā 18.37)

That which in the beginning is like poison (and) which, in the end, is like nectar, that happiness is called *sāttvika*, born of the purity of the mind.

The spirit of participation

As I follow the right values, I feel good about myself. In practicing a value, I may perhaps have to put up with some humiliation. It will certainly require sacrificing something that is dear to me. But then, doing something that is the right thing to do gives me self-satisfaction, a self-worth. Having a low self-esteem is a serious issue. Even though other people might respect me, I do not feel that I am worthy or respectable, because I know what all I am doing, and how I am compromising the values. Thus, following a value gives me self-respect, self-worth, and therefore, self-satisfaction. But even this first step has to be preceded by something else. When Arjuna said, “I will not fight,” Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “Arjuna, that is not right.” Pūjya Swamiji used to say that if *karma* or participation was not the purpose of our lives, then the *karmendriyas*, the organs of action, viz., the hands and legs, would not be given to us. Just the head, eyes, and ears would have sufficed. But we are given hands and legs to participate. Lord Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, “*śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ*.”¹⁰

If one is inactive,¹¹ That is, one knows what is to be done, and still does not do that, then one has to bear the consequences. In the words of Pūjya Swamiji, if one goes against *dharma*, then one gets rubbed in the process. The Bhagavad Gītā and the Upaniṣads point out how the whole universe, except the human being, works on the principle of *paropakāra*, service to others. This is because the rest of the universe is programmed. *īśvara* has programmed everything sentient and insentient in a manner that everything in the creation participates in the scheme of things. Everything contributes.

It is an interdependent universe. Nothing is independent in that nothing can survive on its own without the contribution from others. For this anniversary event to happen, so many have worked behind the scenes. As Śuddhātma said, even the rain gods helped by not bringing the showers! Even in a simple thing such as giving this talk, so much favor from others is involved. There are many factors that make any event possible. When we recognize all the favors that we are receiving constantly, we become humble. There arises in us a sense of gratitude. This gratitude is a great value. We discover this gratitude in ourselves when we recognize how fortunate we are, how much favor we are receiving. It is unasked favor! How all elements of nature are constantly serving us! This year, in the Children’s program, “Being a Contributor – *pañca mahā yajñas*” was the theme that the children worked on in all the camps. The five kinds of offering daily, *pañca mahā yajñas*, must be there in one’s life, because one receives favors from five aspects of the creation. The *devatās*, or the natural forces, and elements, are helping me. My parents, and ancestors are responsible for what I am. My teachers, and thinkers are responsible for all my knowledge. Many human beings help me. All the other beings help me as well. For example, how many volunteers have contributed to make this event possible. How many human beings contribute to my life – farmers, businessmen, and so many others, whoever they may be, and wherever they may be? If I look around, the whole nature is constantly contributing to my life. There is nothing in the universe that does not contribute to my life, directly or indirectly.

¹⁰ नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः । *niyataṁ kuru karma tvam karma jyāyō hyakarmaṇaḥ*

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ *śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyedakarmaṇaḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 3.8)

Do action that is to be done because action is superior to inaction. Even the maintenance of your body would be impossible by inaction.

¹¹ Here inactive is not to be construed as actionless.

The second level of shedding ignorance – Renunciation of non-participation

In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, there is a whole Brāhmaṇa, a whole section, called Madhu Brāhmaṇa, devoted to the description of the interconnectedness in the universe. “*iyam pṛthivī sarvēṣāṃ bhūtānām madhu*,”¹² “this *pṛthivī*, earth, is the product of the actions performed by all the people.” And the *pṛthivī* in turn serves all the living beings. This is how the whole scheme of things is in the creation. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that one cannot become inactive: “*na karmanāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmyam puruṣo’śnute*”¹³; He says, “Arjuna, you want *naiṣkarmya*? You want freedom from action? Freedom from action cannot come from inaction; only by performing right action do you gain freedom from action.” Further, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “*niyataṃ kuru karma tvam*”¹⁴ “Perform your duty, that is expected out of you in your role, according to the script of *dharma*.”

”The tendency not to participate should be given up. Some philosophers, like the Sāṅkhyas, and others, say that *karma* is an obstacle to spiritual progress because it involves *karṣṭvām*, i.e., it involves the sense of doership which comes in the way of contemplation upon the self. Maybe at some point it is an obstacle but not in the beginning. As Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “*yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ kāryameva tat*” “*Yajña, dāna, and tapas* – an action that is a ritual, charity or religious discipline should never be given up.”¹⁴ The participation in the interconnected universe and doing our share to contribute is the second level of giving up the ignorance.

Some people give up *karma* because it is painful, as Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Gītā “*duḥkham ityeva yatkarma kāyakleśabhayāt tyajet*.”¹⁵ People give up *karma* for various reasons, either because it is inconvenient, is very boring, does not bring any desirable reward, it is too much of a hassle, or it may even bring pain as in the case of Arjuna. People tell me that they are going to retire, that is, they are taking premature retirement. I tell them that Lord Kṛṣṇa doesn’t want anyone to retire, because He is the one who has done this creation, and He wants us all to participate. There is this tendency to withdraw, to cop out or to drop out because the work is painful. For example, when we were growing up in India, we all used to work very hard to take the final higher secondary examination. Imagine someone who worked hard, and prepared well to take the examination but became so nervous just the day before the exam, went to his dad, and said, “Dad, I have made a decision. I am going to drop out.” (Laughter). This is the easy way out. Arjuna too wanted to drop out. Lord Kṛṣṇa said, “No way! Dropping out is *adharma*. It is ignorance. And therefore you must participate.”

¹² इयं पृथिवी सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्यै पृथिव्यै सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु ।

iyam pṛthivī sarvēṣāṃ bhūtānām madhu, asyai pṛthivyai sarvāṇi bhūtāni madhu (Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 2.5.1)

This earth is (like) honey (i.e., effect, or helpful) to all beings, and all beings are (like) honey to this earth. (from The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, translated by Swami Madhavananda, Advaita Ashrama, 1997.)

¹³ न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते । na karmanāmanārambhānnaiṣkarmyam puruṣo’śnute

न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥ na ca saṃnyasanādeva siddhiṃ samadhigacchati (Bhagavad Gītā 3.4)

A person does not gain the state of actionlessness by non-performance of actions. Nor does the person attain success (liberation) out of mere renunciation, *sannyāsa*.

¹⁴ यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् । yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ kāryameva tat

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ yajño dānaṃ tapaścaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām (Bhagavad Gītā 18.5)

An action that is a ritual, charity, or religious discipline is not to be given up; that is indeed to be done. Ritual, charity, and religious discipline are indeed purifying for those who are discriminative.

¹⁵ दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् । duḥkhamityeva yatkarma kāyakleśabhayātyajet

स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥ sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgaṃ naiva tyāga-phalaṃ labhet (Bhagavad Gītā 18.8)

One may give up the karma as indeed painful out of fear of affliction to one's physical body. Having done that *rājasika* renunciation, one would certainly not gain the result of renunciation.

The spirit of contribution

Lord Kṛṣṇa did not simply stop with urging Arjuna to participate. He went a step further and said, “*yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra lōkō'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ*.”¹⁶ Not only should one perform action or one's duty but that duty should be performed with the spirit of *yajña*, or with the spirit of offering. In the words of Pūjya Swamiji, one should transform oneself from being a consumer to be a contributor. In other words, doing what is *dharma* or what is right is excellent, but Lord Kṛṣṇa wants us to go a step further. He is teaching us not only to do what is right but to do it as an offering, as a contributor to the comfort, happiness, or well-being of others.

Saccidānanda is our nature

We can contribute at different levels. Our nature is *saccidānanda* – *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*. This is called divinity. We have infinite measure of *saccidānanda* within ourselves. Now, how do we bring out our own divinity? We bring it out by tapping into that divinity. We try to make every action a means of tapping into that divinity, which is *sat-cit-ānanda*. What is *sat*? *Sat* means existence. Doctors and people in the healthcare industry can help people live longer, healthier or happier. One can find ways to contribute to the health, and wellbeing of people. Of course, it is important that I should first live healthy and happy!

What is *cit*? *Cit* is consciousness or knowledge. One can contribute knowledge, by directly imparting knowledge. Or one can find a way to support the *paramparā*, this teaching tradition of the Ārṣa Vidyā, the knowledge of the *ṛṣis*. One can contribute directly by teaching. Many of the people who have been coming here for long time are very learned, and scholarly people in their own right. They can share their knowledge. Swami Chinmayananda Saraswatiji used to say, “If I have one unsuspecting listener I will attack him.” (*laughter*). It was his style, he would say that. (*laughter*). The idea is to share the knowledge. By sharing the knowledge, one will realize how much one knows, and what joy it gives. Just as giving love gives one great joy, sharing knowledge also gives one great joy, because it is the nature of oneself. It is the manifestation of one's fullness. One has to discover the ways to share the knowledge. There is a Swami who comes to Tattvatirtha¹⁷ every year from Śimla. He attends our classes, and writes letters to his devotees and friends, summarizing something from the class. People are very happy to receive his letters. All I am saying is that everybody knows, everyone has a lot of knowledge to share. As Swami Chinmayananda Saraswatiji used to say, “Don't be a spiritual capitalist!” (*laughter*). Thus, in some way or the other, sharing our knowledge directly, or being a part of sharing the knowledge, is another way of owning up ourselves.

What is *ānanda*? *Ānanda* is happiness or love. We can give *ānanda*. You may say, “How can I be *ānanda*? I feel so sad within. How can I give out *ānanda*?” (*laughter*). We want the world to make us happy, to fulfill our desires, to do what we want. We want the world to love us. This is the wrong attitude to have because it goes against a very fundamental reality. Nobody can give us love, and nobody can give us happiness. Nothing can give us happiness. Happiness comes by giving happiness. Love has to be discovered by giving love. Let us resolve to make our actions as a means of reaching out to people, to contribute, to create some comfort in somebody, to bring a little bit of happiness to somebody. One can make someone feel loved. One can express some kindness in one's actions. One can ask oneself, “Can I be compassionate? Can I be forgiving?” Kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are all expressions of love, and one can display them in one's life and actions. But one may say, “Swamiji, I love him but why do I have to show it in action?”

16 यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः । *yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra lōkō'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ*

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥ *tadartham karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara* (Bhagavad Gītā 3.9)

A person is bound by *karma* if it is not done as *yajña* (i.e., as an offering to *īśvara*). For this reason, Kaunteya (Arjuna)! Being one free from attachment, perform action for the sake of that (*yajña*).

17 Adhyatma Vidya Mandir, Ahmedabad, India. (<http://www.tattvatirtha.org/index.html>)

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that love and *bhakti* are not simply mental moods. They have to be expressed. There was a great teacher by the name of Vallabhācārya who explained the word “*bhakti*.” The word is derived from the root “*bhaj*” – *sevāyām*. “*Bhaj*” means “to serve,” one of the simple meanings. To “*bhaj*,” the *pratyaya* (i.e., suffix) “*ktin*” is added, which means “with devotion or with love.” So, according to Vallabhācārya, “*bhakti*” means “serving with devotion,” and not just the feeling of devotion in the mind.

As Pūjya Swamiji would say, “Physicalize your attitude.” If you want to express love, physicalize it, meaning that action becomes a vehicle for the manifestation of your love. If someone says, “I don’t feel the love,” the answer would be, “Do it; fake it till you make it.” (*laughter*). Because there is an infinite reservoir of kindness within ourselves, and we can easily afford to give a little bit. But we are not sure. “Swamiji, if I become kind, they will take advantage of me, and they will use me as a door mat.” Such fears and insecurities are there. Really speaking, they are the obstacles in giving. Our own minds become the obstacle. Well then, one does not need to give everything away. One can start by giving one little thing at a time. One can begin with just one act of kindness, a little bit of compassion, a little bit of forgiveness. If one feels good, then one will be encouraged to give more. This is the way to begin contributing *ānanda* or love.

Sat-cit-ānanda is what we have in infinite measure. That is what we can contribute in our own ways. What is important of course, is the spirit of contribution. We may not recognize that we have plenty to contribute. But we can start in a small measure and slowly discover the abundance in us to give from. Once a woman came to Pūjya Swamiji, and told him, “Swamiji. I hate my boss. What should I do?” He told her, “Every morning when you go to work, get a fresh and fragrant rose. Go to your boss and present the rose to him.” The woman was bewildered and remarked, “Really, do I present a rose to him?” Swamiji replied, “Yes, Do it.” The woman could not still believe it but Swamiji insisted that she must do that, if necessary, faking it in the beginning. Swamiji’s prescription was to give the flower for one *mandala*, or 41 days. The lesson from the story is that the woman did what Swamiji told her, and her perspective changed.

The third level of shedding ignorance – Renunciation of action

By being a contributor, one progressively comes to the next stage. As Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji said the first stage is the performance of *karma*, then comes *karma-sannyāsa*. One may ask, “Swami, do I always have to perform the *karma*? Is there no end to it?” If duty is done in the right way, then there is an end to it. The inner satisfaction that, “I have done enough,” should arise in me. Of course, *karma-sannyāsa*, is renouncing action ritually, by a procedure. But ideally, when I feel that *tamas* is gone, that is, inactivity is gone, *rajas* is gone, that is, my selfishness and grabbing tendencies are gone, then I have *sattva*. *Sattva* is the last expression of ignorance, but a very favorable expression of ignorance. As the mind becomes *sāttvika*, there is progressively a self-satisfaction which grows into a certain degree such that I no longer see the need for doing anything. Now my priorities change, and there arises in me a strong desire for knowledge, *vividiṣā*. When this happens, the scriptures say that one can then renounce the duties. So, one can give up the duty but only to embrace a greater responsibility of pursuing knowledge. Karma-tyāga, renouncing actions, is the next level of renunciation. Then, one goes to the teacher, and the final renunciation happens in the wake of knowledge. The final layer of ignorance goes. Already a lot of ignorance is gone, and one is pretty close. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “*svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*, by worshipping īśvara with one’s karma or duties, a human being attains siddhi or perfection.”¹⁸ This perfection is a relative perfection, called *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* or purification of mind.

¹⁸ यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् । यताः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येना सर्वमिदं ततम्

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ *svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ* (Bhagavad Gītā 18.46)

Through one’s duty, worshipping Him from whom is the creation of the beings, by whom all this is pervaded, a human being gains success.

Pūjya Swamiji used to say that when one gets to this stage, one has achieved 80% of the final goal. *Antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* is not an ordinary thing. That is what takes time. To purify the mind of *rajas* and *tamas* or the *rāga-dveṣas* is a big thing. It is like turning the flow of the river. The Kaṭhapaniṣad says, “*kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣat āvṛttacakṣuḥ amṛtatvam icchan*”¹⁹ “desiring immortality this discriminating person turned his faculty completely inwards” ; “turning inwards” means that he has made his mind free from *rāga-dveṣas*.

The fourth level of shedding ignorance – Renunciation of doership by knowledge

The mind now becomes inward-looking and abiding. That is the condition which is suited for the pursuit of knowledge. He goes to the teacher who is *śrotriya* and *brahmaniṣtha*,²⁰ and follows the pursuit of knowledge through *śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam*, culminating in the final renunciation of the ignorance in the form of *kartṛtvam* or doership. That is what Vedānta teaches as how to become free from doership by recognizing that the self is *akartā* or actionless. Of course, when the preparedness in terms of the relative perfection is already there, then the *śravaṇam* becomes most effective. It is said, “*paunaḥpunyena śravaṇam kuryāt*” “keep listening to scriptures again, and again.” Every time you listen, there is something to learn! Many people come and tell me, “Swamiji, every time I listen to the tenth man story, I get something new out of it.” Something clicks at different times. There is no alternative to *śravaṇam*. Listening must be continued. It is ideal, of course, if you come to a place like the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam where there is direct listening. Failing that, you can take advantage of the other means, such as the electronic media, that are available to us.

Translating the teaching to our lives

There is also an important thing called *mananam*. Let me give you my idea of *mananam*. Traditionally *mananam* is explained as a process of reasoning by which one removes one's doubts. I don't remember having many doubts anyway. Because the way the teacher teaches, it doesn't leave any doubt. Maybe the teacher does the *mananam* for us. When we listen to the teacher, and when we understand what the teacher is communicating, the important thing that we have to do is to ask what does the teaching mean to me? Suppose I have understood the principle of transforming myself from a consumer to a contributor, what does it mean to me in the way I am living my life? What should I be doing? What does it mean for me to be a contributor? In what way is the spirit of contribution reflected in my actions, attitudes, and values? In other words, translating the teaching to one's life is an extension of *śravaṇam*, which can be called as *mananam*. This is an important step. What we listen, and enjoy in the classes doesn't stay with us. We have not performed that step of translating the understanding to our own lives. And we find ourselves forgetting everything that we have listened, and we go back to the same rut. Therefore, *mananam* is very important.

19 पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् । *parāñci khāni vyatṛṇatsvayambhūstasmātparāṇ paśyati nāntarātman*

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ *kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣadāvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchān*

(Kaṭhapaniṣad, 4.1). The Lord destroyed the sense organs (by making them) extrovert. Therefore, everyone perceives outside (objects, and) not the *ātmā* within. Desiring immortality, a rare discriminative one with withdrawn eyes (from outer objects) sees the *ātmā* within. (from The Kaṭhapaniṣad, based on Swami Paramarthananda's talks, compiled by Sarojini Varadarajan, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Coimbatore, India, 2012.)

20 तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् । *tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrōtriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭham* (Muṇḍakopaniṣad, 1.2.12). To gain the knowledge of brahman, he must go with sacrificial twigs in hand to a teacher who is well-versed in scriptures, and who has clear knowledge about brahman. (Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Part 1 Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 2006.)

We should be asking ourselves, “What does the teaching mean to me? How should I talk? How should I act? How should I change my attitudes?” The third step is *nididhyāsanam*, which is to assimilate the teaching, and make it our own.

The blessing of Vedānta

We discussed how ignorance is removed in several stages. First, *adharma* is given up by following *dharma*, by following values. Second, inaction is given up by being active. Third, Self-centeredness is given up by being a contributor. Finally, the *karṣṭvam* is given up by knowledge of the self or *ātmā* that it is actionless. It is by *tyāga* that one gains immortality, “*tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānuśuḥ*.” *Amṛtam* is ambrosia and means *ānanda*. The whole process is for *ānanda*. Otherwise, who will want to do all this stuff if it was just for exertion? Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “*yattadagre viṣamiva*,” in the beginning it might look like exertion; “*pariṇāme'mṛtopamam*” but it culminates into *amṛtatvam*, meaning *ānanda*.⁹ So, Vedānta teaches us the journey of *tyāga*. And “*tyāgāt śantiḥ anantaram*,”³ any time one gives up something or one does something right, there is self-satisfaction and peace of mind.

This is the blessing of Vedānta, which teaches us *tyāga* as a means of removing ignorance and owning up our true nature, which is divinity. The more we discover the divinity, wholeness, fullness in us, the more we discover the true nature of ourselves. As our perception of ourselves changes, our perception of others also changes. We look at others the way we look at ourselves. No separate process is required. The extent to which we discover divinity in ourselves, we see the manifestation of divinity everywhere. For this discovery, first, it requires wisdom and clarity of understanding. Second, it requires courage to follow the values and to do what is right. We pray to Pūjya Swamiji, and Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti to give us the wisdom to accept gracefully what we cannot change, and give us the courage to do what we can to bring about the change to become a contributor. Let that wisdom, courage, and strength from our *gurus* and Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti be with us. Om!

**The 29th Anniversary Celebration
of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam,
Anaikatty is on 10th November**

Ārṣa Vidyā Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA,

33rd Anniversary – August 11, 2019 ¹

Swami Pratyagbodhananda Saraswati on Karma Yoga Māhātmyam

One of the important verses in the Bhagavad Gītā is:²

*sannyāsastu mahābāho duḥkhamāptumayogataḥ
yogayukto munirbrahma nacireṇādhigacchati*

sannyāsa becomes a tragedy if a person is not ready (*ayogataḥ*), meaning not having the right mental disposition. A mature person (*yogataḥ*) alone can live the life of *sannyāsa*, a contemplative life. A *sannyāsī* lives with the teacher, does *pramāṇa-vicāra*, and learns Vedānta or the knowledge of the Self. Bhagavad Gītā or *śruti*, meaning the Upaniṣads, address only two persons. One

is a *karma-yogī* and the other is a *karma-sannyāsī*. Both are *jijñāsus*. A *jijñāsu* is the one who only wants knowledge and nothing less than that. A *jijñāsu* is a *mumukṣu*, one who desires freedom, and freedom can be gained only in terms of knowledge. This fact is very clear to both *karma-yogī* as well as *karma-sannyāsī*. A *karma-yogī* performs *karma*, daily duties (*nitya-karma*), and occasional duties (*naimittika-karma*), with a certain attitude. Whatever action a *karma-yogī* does, he/she does it enthusiastically and cheerfully. Doing a *karma* such as *pūja*, he/she performs it with enthusiasm. There is never a weariness, *āyāsa*, while performing the *karma*. He/she looks upon the *pūja* as the time one can spend with Bhagavān. My teachers, Swami Chinmayanandaji and Swami Dayanandaji, were always enthusiastic in teaching. I remember one time when after Swami Dayanandaji finished a course, Chinmayanandaji nonchalantly asked him, “When are you starting the next one?” Both the teachers were always positive and energetic. Once, some of the students of Swami Dayanandaji, told him that they wanted to retire. Swamiji immediately said, “What retirement? I am still working! Keep working. There is no retirement!” A *karma-yogī* keeps performing actions happily, as an offering to *īśvara*, as other-centered actions, and as a contributor. In this regard, he/she has this clarity of purpose in performing the duties. In due course, the *karma-yogī* gains the mental preparedness, in terms of emotional maturity, and a relative cheerfulness, required for the knowledge of the Self.



1 The 33rd anniversary of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA was conducted on August 11, 2019 at the newly inaugurated Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam. The talk by Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji on this occasion is summarized here. The talk was transcribed and edited by Krishnanand Maillacheruvu and V. Swaminathan, respectively.

2 संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः ।

योगयुक्तो मुनिर्ब्रह्म नचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ (Bhagavad Gītā 5.6)

Renunciation of action, Arjuna, the mighty armed, is difficult to accomplish without karma-yoga. Whereas, one who is committed to a life of karma-yoga and is capable of reasoning, gains brahman quickly. ((Note that the translations of the Gītā verses referred in this article are taken from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 5th reprint, 2015.))

The words of Vedānta serve like a mirror. Just as one looks in the mirror to see oneself, exposing oneself to the words of Vedānta, one gains the knowledge of oneself, provided one has the preparedness of the mind. The preparedness of the mind is nothing but the emotional maturity. One has to gain the maturity through *karma-yoga*. As Swami Dayanandaji used to say that a person is either mature or is maturing. He would never say that one is immature. *Karma*, performed with an attitude of *yoga*, provides the field for one to mature, to neutralize one's likes and dislikes, that is to convert one's binding desires into non-binding desires. One has to gain the maturity to manage one's likes and dislikes. It should not be the other way that one is managed by one's attachments and aversions. One who has accomplished the mastery over one's likes and dislikes is a *yogī* or a *yuktaḥ*. He/she can be a *karma-yogī* or a *karma-sannyāsī*. With consistent exposure to the Vedāntic teaching for a length of time, he/she gains the knowledge of the Self, and becomes a *jīvan-muktaḥ*. He/she is extolled as a *sthitaprajñah*.

Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa advocates to Arjuna, “*tasmādyogī bhavārjuna* therefore, be a *yogin*.”³ Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to perform his duties as a *kṣatriya* in safeguarding *dharma*. In everyone's life, during all the waking hours, there are duties and duties. Swami Dayanandaji said that a person performing his/her own duties will be very humble. Why so? Because he/she knows that all the duties cannot be completely performed. The wife is humble because she knows that she cannot do all that she needs to do for the husband or family. The husband is also humble because he knows that he cannot fulfill all his duties towards the family. Therefore, a person who has duties is a humble person. One is humble in the sense that one refrains from demanding one's rights without performing first one's duties. The wife performing her duties towards the husband, the latter's rights are taken care of. If the husband performs his duties towards the wife, then her rights are taken care of. If one performs the duties towards others, and they reciprocate in turn, there are no conflicts. Conflict arises only when one asks for the right without performing one's duty. The concept of duty is ingrained in the Indian culture. This is our tradition. This is emphasized repeatedly in the Gītā in statements such as “*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi*,” “*niyataṁ kuru karma tvam*.”⁴ This is *karma-yoga* and is so beautiful!

Ego always manifests as one's likes and dislikes. How does one neutralize them every time they arise? This is done only through *karma-yoga* and this is beautifully exemplified by Lord Kṛṣṇa dancing on the head of the *kāliya nāga*. Every time the hood of *kāliya* goes up, the Lord strikes it. The poison comes out and the *nāga* becomes poison-free. Similarly, when the likes and dislikes come up, performing the actions with the attitude of *karma-yoga* neutralizes them. One is rendered free from the poison of likes and dislikes.

³ तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।

कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥ (Bhagavad Gītā 6.46)

A *yogin* is considered superior to those who live a life of meditation, superior even to the scholars, and superior to those who perform action. Therefore, Arjuna! be a *yogin*.

⁴ योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ (Bhagavad Gītā 2.48)

Remaining steadfast in yoga, Dhanañjaya, perform actions abandoning attachment, and remaining the same to success and failure. The evenness of mind is called yoga.

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ (Bhagavad Gītā 3.8)

Do action that is to be done because action is superior to inaction. Even the maintenance of your body would be impossible by inaction.

One final thing that I want to share with you is the story of Mahārāja Parīkṣit. Swami Dayanandaji encouraged me to talk about Bhāgavatam. He told me, “You know both Vedānta and Bhāgavatam, and it is a very good combination.” While hunting in the forest, losing his bearings because of his hunger and thirst, Parīkṣit committed an *aparādha* to Śamīka ṛṣi by putting a dead snake around his neck. Finding the dead snake around the neck of his father, the ṛṣi's son, Śṛṅgī, was enraged, and cursed that the doer of the act will meet his death in seven days by a live snake. Thus, the cursed Parīkṣit knew that his death is imminent in seven days. He had no tension and was asking all the learned *maharṣis* only one question. “My death is around the corner. What shall I do? What should I listen to? What should I not listen to? How should I spend my time in these seven days?” Nobody could give him *amṛtatvam*, immortality, in seven days. Then, there arrived Śukadeva son of *maharṣi* Vyāsa, who always talked about reality.⁵ When you want to know, the teacher always comes to you. You are all here today. I am sure that every one of you can tell a story as to how you came to Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. Some *puṇyam* brought you here to get the *darśan* of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti and then the *darśan* of this teaching also. Parīkṣit surrendered to Śukadeva. He listened to the Bhāgavatam narrated by Śukadeva, forgetting his hunger and thirst, the very same things that brought him the curse of death. Having comprehended Śukadeva's teaching, “*aham brahma param dhāma brahmāhaṁ paramaṁ padam* I am *brahman*, the absolute and the ultimate destination, and that *brahman* is me,”⁶ Parīkṣit says in so many words, “*siddho'smyanugrāhito'smi*,” “*praviṣṭo brahmanirvāṇamabhayaṁ*,” “I am blessed and have become fulfilled,” “I have gained that *brahman* which is free from fear.”⁷ One can see the *pratyakṣa mokṣa* of Parīkṣit.⁸ He gained *mokṣa* in seven days!

Therefore, a person who is a *jijñāsu* definitely gains *mokṣa*. He has no bad lot. Only thing that we require in our life is “*athāto brahmajijñāsā*,” “thereafter, therefore, an inquiry of *brahman*.”⁹ The word, *atha* (thereafter), is very important. After equipping oneself with the necessary qualifications, one begins the inquiry of *brahman*. The preparedness, in terms of the purification of the mind, brings out a desire to know. And knowledge alone can liberate. To gain this knowledge one goes to a teacher.¹⁰ One day, during the course, Swami Dayanandaji was making a joke. He said that earlier the students would go to a teacher and teacher will sit in one place and teach. Nowadays, the student goes and comes back, the teacher sits in one place! This is the difference between then and now. The teaching remains the same. Om.

5 The etymology of the word Śuka: शुद्धं शुक्लं कायति (गायति) इति शुकः *śuddhaṁ śuklaṁ kāyati (gāyati) iti śukaḥ*. One who sounds (or sings) that which is pure, unsullied is *śukaḥ*. [root कै (1, P) → शब्दे *kai* → *śabde*, to sound, *kāyati*; also, root गै (1, P) → शब्दे *gai* → *śabde*, to sing, to speak in singing manner, *gāyati*.]

6 अहं ब्रह्म परं धाम ब्रह्माहं परमं पदम् । (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.5.11)

7 "सिद्धोऽस्म्यनुगृहीतोऽस्मि," (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.6.2); "प्रविष्टो ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमभयं," (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.6.5)

8 प्राक्कूले बर्हिष्यासीनो गङ्गाकूल उदङ्मुखः । ब्रह्मभूतो महायोगी निःसङ्गश्छिन्नसंशयः ॥ (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.6.10)
prākkūle barhiṣyāsīno gaṅgākūla udaṁmukhaḥ | brahmabhūto mahāyogī niḥsaṅgaśchinnaśayaḥ ||
 Seated on the banks of gaṅgā, on darbha grass that are spread facing east, himself facing the north, Parīkṣit, who was free from attachments, and doubts became brahman (brahma bhūtaḥ bhavati).

9 अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा (Brahmasūtra, 1.1.1)

10 तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् । तद्विजिज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् (Muṇḍakopaniṣad, 1.2.12) To gain the knowledge of brahman, he must go with sacrificial twigs in hand to a teacher who is well-versed in scriptures, and who has clear knowledge about brahman. (Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Part 1 Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Arsha Vidya Research Publication Trust, Chennai, India, 2006.)

Ārṣa Vidyā Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA,

33rd Anniversary – August 11, 2019 ¹

Swami Tadatmananda Saraswati on the Inner Divinity in All

It is a great joy to join all of you on this occasion and first and foremost, congratulations to you all for bringing up this building complex.² It is exquisite and you have worked so hard to bring it up. It is going to be a tremendous achievement that will bless so many people for decades together. Congratulations to you all. It was especially nice to hear Manu³ sharing his personal journey and describing how the teachings of Vedānta were very central in crucial times in his life when he underwent an inner transformation, and how he was very much blessed by the teachings. It seems to me that we perhaps need the teachings of Vedānta now more than any other time. Each and every one of us



needs these teachings because they give us a perspective, an orientation on life, which is crucial for us as individuals. But, more significantly, I would like to share with you a perspective that these teachings are important to us as a community, as a culture, as a nation and as a world. We live at a time, and you know this very well, where there is a lot of divisiveness amongst people, not just in this country but everywhere. It is almost like some kind of virus that has been infecting people in Europe, in this country and in India. No country seems to be exempt from this virus attack. This virus of divisiveness, if we can call it such, is manifest in a variety of negative ways that we see in this country, where people who are not white and Christians are subject to various kinds of discrimination. We see how Mexicans are treated in this country. We see how Muslims are treated and the attitude towards Muslims. In fact, there is an attitude towards almost anyone who is different, anyone who is bold enough to wear a *pagadi* or turban, or the ladies who wear the *hijab* or headscarf. To wear that *pagadi* or *hijab* is an act of bravery in this country because it makes you a target for anger and possibly worse. In some cases, it makes you a target for violence. I don't want to go on about this at length, you know it too well. We see this virus of divisiveness every day in the newspapers and news sources.

The vaccine, if I can use that metaphor, for this virus of divisiveness, is this teaching! You all know very well that the vision of the *ṛṣis* taught us all clearly that our bodies are different, shapes are different, colors are different, ancestry is different, our minds are different, our inclinations are different, our likes and dislikes are different – each and every one of us is so different as individuals. But the *ṛṣis* taught us as well that the consciousness within us all is the same.

¹ The 33rd anniversary of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA was conducted on August 11, 2019 at the newly inaugurated Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam. The talk given by Swami Tadatmanandaji on this occasion is summarized here. The talk was transcribed and edited by Krishnanand Maillacheruvu and V. Swaminathan, respectively.

² Swamiji was referring to the new Swami Dayananda Vijñāna Bhavanam.

³ Dr. Karthik (Manu) Ramanan, an alumni of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, was the master of ceremonies at the anniversary.

The consciousness with which I know what is happening in my mind right now, and the consciousness by which you know what is happening in your mind right now, that consciousness is one and the same. Because as we have all learned well from Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji and all of our teachers, there is only one all-pervading consciousness. We call it *ātmā*, we call it *brahman*, we call it *īśvara* – whatever you call it, it is one, it is all-pervasive, and it is the truth of you and the truth of me. It is the truth which we, in casual terms, call inner divinity. The problem of course is that when you meet someone you don't see that inner divinity. You see that turban. You see that headscarf. You see the color of the skin. You hear the accent of the voice – whatever it may be. These are the things that people respond to so strongly and fail to recognize that inner divinity. The truth of each and every one of us is that same *śuddha caitanya*, that same pure consciousness.

Why don't we see the inner divinity? Well, there is a very beautiful verse from the Guru *stotram* that we chanted many times at the feet of pūjya Swami Dayanandaji:

*ajñānatimirāndhasya jñānāñjanaśalākayā
cakṣurunmīlitaṃ yena tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ*

(My Salutations to that reverential teacher, who opened my eyes, by applying the collyrium of self-knowledge in my eyes, which had got blinded by the cataract of ignorance.)

What a beautiful verse! We don't see that all pervasive, non-dually one divinity. As an important aside, one will never see the divinity in someone else unless one discovers the divinity within oneself. The *jñāna* or *vidyā* or knowledge removes the covering or the veil of ignorance. In this way, "*cakṣuḥ unmīlitaṃ*," our eyes are opened. The veil of ignorance is removed so that we can recognize not only our own inner divinity, our true nature as *saccidānanda ātmā*, but simultaneously recognize the divinity in others. How can it be otherwise? When you recognize your own innate divinity, how can you not recognize the divinity of every other person? Because it becomes so absolutely clear that it is the same consciousness, looking out through my eyes, and the same consciousness, looking out through your eyes. This is the teaching of Advaita Vedānta. This is the teaching we received from Pūjya Swami Dayanandaji, from Swami Veditatmanandaji, and all the wonderful teachers who are here at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. This is what brings about a transformation, which arguably, we need today more than anything else.

This virus of divisiveness can be treated with this medicine called Advaita Vedānta. Each and every one of us play a role in eradicating the virus. We are all blessed to receive these teachings. We have been blessed by that ointment of knowledge, so to speak. Our eyes have been opened up. And having our eyes opened up, we won't discriminate against that lady with the headscarf or the person who looks different or sounds different. Our eyes have been opened. At least, please don't tell me, "Swamiji, I am not there yet." You are there! You've got it! I mean, definitely there is more maturation to take place for all of us! But you have got it. Your eyes have been opened. You won't discriminate against those people. You understand that it is the same divinity that dwells within us all. But now comes the next step. It is our responsibility, our *dharma*, as Manu very nicely said, to help others understand. You can help others understand. The best way of helping others understand is bring them here for these wonderful classes and programs. What better way of helping others is there? Bring them to these teachings. So many of Swami Dayanandaji's teachings and the teachings of our other Swamis are all available on the internet. Even if people cannot physically come here to the Gurukulam, they can listen online and their eyes can be opened with the help of these teachings. And what can we say except to express our tremendous gratitude to Swami Dayanandaji, to our entire *guruparamparā*, the lineage of teachers, for giving us that medicine to open our eyes to the reality of the divinity of us all. Thank you. Om!

Krishna Jayanthi at AVG



ACHARYA'S ANUGRAHA BHASHANAM AT COIMBATORE

Swami Sadatmananda delivered anugraha bhashanam on the occasion of **Arsha Avinash Foundation, Coimbatore's Bhagavad Gita Class Valedictory & Mundaka Upanisad Class Inauguration** on August 27, 2019. His talks are summarised below.

Vedas are the most valuable scriptures of mankind and are timeless. The four Vedas are Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana. Upanisads are the concluding part of the Vedas. Vedanta usually refers to Upanisads. The word Vedanta consists of two parts- Veda and anta (end). But in its broad sense, this word Vedanta covers not only Upanisads but also the Bhagavad Gita and Brahma sutra. **Vedanta deals with the truth of jagat (universe), jiva (individual) and Isvara (The Lord).** Jivas are attached to the physical world with passion, desires and remain chained to karma. Karma is the reason for rebirth.



Vedanta speaks of Atma Jnana and Jnana Phala. **Moksa or mukti or liberation is the goal of life (Sadhya).** It is attained only through knowledge (Sadhana) given by Vedanta. This knowledge is available in prasthanatrayam a collective term used to denote Bhagavad Gita, Upanisads and Brahma Sutra.

Vedas have two parts- karma kanda and jnana kanda. Karma kanda deals with rituals. Karma kanda purifies the mind and Jnana kanda shows the path of self knowledge. Jnana yoga is also referred to as buddhi yoga. The goal of buddhi yoga is self knowledge. Lord Krishna says that jnana is the purest and it leads to complete purification.

There are three parts in jnana yoga- sravanam, mananam and nididhyasanam. Sravanam is hearing or study of Vedanta Sastra aided by a Guru. Mananam is deliberating over the various ideas and thinking on the discussions based on sravanam. Nididhyasanam is meditation on truth or non-duality.

The message of Bhagavad Gita can be summarised in two words – “mama dharma”. The first verse of Bhagavad Gita in Verse 1 of Chapter 1 starts with the word "dharma". The last verse of Bhagavad Gita in Verse 78 of Chapter 18 ends with the word "mama". The first meaning of mama dharma is my duty. It teaches that I should do my duty without worrying about its fruits. The second meaning of mama dharma is I should understand my real nature as Sat Chit Ananda. Hence the message of Bhagavad Gita is “mama dharma”

The teaching starts in Bhagavad Gita Verse 11 of Chapter 2 with the word "asocyan". The teaching ends in Bhagavad Gita Verse 66 of Chapter 18 with the word "ma sucah". The meaning of both the words “asocyan” and “ma sucah” is “Do not grieve over anything that does not deserve any grief.”

Where there is Lord Krishna and Arjuna, there is prosperity, victory, wealth and righteousness. Bhagavad Gita study can be followed by study of Upanisads. Mundaka Upanisad is relatively easy and is usually the first Upanisad studied. My best wishes for success in your spiritual journey.

The students were very happy to listen to **Swami Sadatmananda's talks, which was a wonderful summary of entire Vedanta Teaching.**

Report by N. Avinashilingam

Shraddhanjali

Swami Tatvabhodhananda Sarawati attained eternal hood on 24th August 2019. He was student of Pujya Swamiji and did his Three Year Residential Course at AVG Anaikatti. He was conducting Vedanta Classes at Pondicheri and other places. His Shodasi was carried out on 13th September 2019



Swamini Divyatmanandaji, from Mauritius was also Pujya Swamiji's student and lived most of her time at Rishikesh Ashramam. Subsequent to her mukti on 23rd August 2019 her Shodasi was done on 12th September 2019.





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GURU PEYARCHI PUJA

A Special Abhisheka and Puja will be performed at the Gurukulam on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 on the occasion of **Guru Peyarchi** to invoke the blessings of **Lord Medha Dakshinamurti** for the welfare of all.

We welcome you to participate in the puja on this day and receive Guru's blessings.

PROGRAMME

Abhisheka and Puja	...	10-00 AM
Diparadhana	...	12-15 PM
Prasadam	...	12-30 PM

P.S. Please send your puja offering Rs. 251/- to reach us on or before 28-10-2019. Use the form given below. Please make your Cheque or DD payable to **Sruti Seva Trust, Coimbatore**. Alternatively amount can be transferred for the Credit of **Sruti Seva Trust** to Indian Overseas Bank, Chinna Thudagam Branch, A/c. No. 064301000007129. IFS Code IOBA 0000643. In case of Electronic Transfer please intimate details over E-mail at office@arshavidya.in. You may also be one of the sponsors of the day by offering Rs. 5000/- or more.

PUJA OFFERING

Enclosed is my offering for the GURU PEYARCHI on 29-10-2019

Name (IN BLOCK LETTERS) Nakshatra Gotra

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